

<http://baltimore.cbslocal.com/2013/05/14/port-of-baltimore-holds-17th-annual-ro-ro-rodeo-training/>

BALTIMORE (WJZ)—More rolling cargo comes through the Port of Baltimore than any other dock in America. And keeping vehicles undamaged is one reason for that success.

Mike Schuh has more on the port's 17th annual Ro/Ro Rodeo.

Just on the other side of the ships at the port are rows and rows of cars, trucks and machinery that can move on its own power. Ro/Ro (Roll on/Roll off) is cargo that can be driven on and off a ship.

Driving one of them is a lot different than a car.

"Well, there is a lot of machinery we don't know how to drive," said Heather Spindler, longshore worker.

Some 200 drivers at Port of Baltimore received four hours of hands-on training, which is keeping millions of dollars of heavy metal from being damaged and damaging the port's reputation.

"A simple bump can mean a lot of damage, especially if one of these machines comes up against an automobile," said Steve Jarczyński, Maryland Port Administration Trade Development.

This is the 17th time the port and the shippers paid the drivers to be here.

"Some of it I've never seen," said Michael Hitchens, longshore worker.

Now he's seen and driven it. So when the time comes he can put it on the dock damage free, keeping the shippers happy.

"Obviously this is not the only selling point for this port, but obviously it's one of the big ones," said Richard Scher, Port of Baltimore.

Good for the port.

Good for the drivers.

"Well, it will give me more opportunities to do more jobs," said Spindler.

"The more things you know how to do, the more things you know how to drive, the better you'll be," said Tom Scharn, longshore worker.

Right now Baltimore is the only port in the country doing this kind of training.

The port saw a 17 percent increase on rolling cargo last year and set an all time record.

BALTIMORE BUSINESS JOURNAL

The Port of Baltimore held its 17th annual "Ro-Ro Rodeo" on May 14.

Jack Lambert
May 14, 2013

Imagine driving a 108,000-pound bulldozer straight up a 45-degree incline on rickety wooden planks. Upon reaching the top of the hill, you quickly shift gears and power through a space no bigger than a museum hallway. Then you downshift and take the 15-foot death machine down another 45-degree slope before getting out and starting all over again.

Oh, and please try not to damage the hundreds of thousands of dollars of equipment while doing so. Thanks.

Port of Baltimore dockworkers ran through started running through that particular challenge Tuesday as part of the port's 17th annual "Ro-Ro rodeo." More than 200 International Longshoremen's Association workers are scheduled to take part in the two-day event, which helps train longshoreman to drive roll-on, roll-off cargo.

Tractors, bulldozers and scissors lifts are just some of the 1.09 million tons of roll-on, roll-off equipment the port handled in 2012. The Port of Baltimore ranked No. 1 among all U.S. ports in that category and saw a 16 percent increase in roll-on, roll-off cargo last year. Roll-on, roll-off cargo made up 11 percent of the port's total 9.59 million tons of cargo in 2012.

Unlike containerized cargo, which has to be raised and lowered onto cargo ships by crane, roll-on, roll-off equipment is driven on and off the vessels. That is where the rodeo comes in.

Nine equipment manufacturers, Ports America Chesapeake and the Maryland Port Administration, among others, team up once a year to train dockworkers in driving the heavy machinery.

The \$20,000 rodeo is covered by insurance, said Steve Jarczyński, head of trade development for the Maryland Port Administration. That cost is miniscule compared to the hundreds of thousands of dollars the Port of Baltimore saves by avoiding accidents with its ro-ro equipment, Jarczyński said.

"We are trending almost to a point where we can't measure [damages] in terms of pieces of equipment," Jarczyński said. "We're at 99.98 damage free, so it's less than .02 percent."

ILA workers are given four hours of paid time off to attend the rodeo, according to port officials. Once there, they drive various types of heavy machinery in hopes of receiving certification from the Port of Baltimore. ILA drivers do not have to be certified to operate ro-ro vehicles, Jarczyński said.

The hardest test at the rodeo is a pair of cargo containers on a raised platform. Drivers have to navigate the machines up a ramp without bumping makeshift bamboo ceiling representing the height of a ship's cargo entrance. Next, the drivers have to navigate an eight-foot long space between two cargo containers.

One worker on Tuesday crashed one of the machines into the container, denting the equipment while scraping off the paint. Insurance helps cover the cost of any accidents during the rodeo, said Mike Malkinski, port operations manager for Case New Holland, one of the top importers and exporters of agricultural and construction equipment at the Port of Baltimore.

While the training exercise might result in some extra cost for companies importing to Baltimore, it pays off in the end, Malkinski said.

“It helps us,” Malkinski said of the rodeo. “Our goal is to deliver the best product we can whether the customer is here in the U.S. or going out of seats.”